
Movie Makers

Dedicated to the Interests of the Serious
Motion Picture Maker

June-July, 1998

Getting Your Production Seen

Some enterprising students here at Cameron University built a drive-in theater on student Dan Perrin's farm. The purpose of the drive-in is to show the students work. The "Videomaker" May, 1998 issue contains an article concerning the initial building and subsequent "drive-in night."

Basically, the students erected a 16 foot high screen and used a video projector to display their programs. A \$15 dollar low-power radio transmitter built from a kit was used to transmit the sound to the audience in their cars.

This spring we held our second drive-in night, showing premiering 14 new student projects as well as enjoying some humorous pieces poking fun at the professors. Approximately 70 people attended.

Ok, building a drive-in is a bit much for showing your work. So how can you get others to see your production?

Have a viewing party

Invite your friends, perhaps the local media, and those involved in the production over to your place to watch your latest work. Many musical performing groups now have listening parties where their latest CD is played. Fix some snacks and premiere your work. Be prepared to make a few remarks before hand. Also, it is recommended that the viewing party be by invitation only. That way you can control your audience. And if you want an excellent recipe for a cream cheese ball, let me know!

Local Arts Council

Perhaps your program has local appeal. Maybe its a documentary about a local celebrity or a local historical event. If it has local interest, get in touch with your area arts council and see if they would be interested in sponsoring a showing. Sometimes your local library might be

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George W Cushman
Founder 1909-1996

Matt Jenkins, Editor

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interested in hosting a performance of your local work.

Public Access Channel

The public access or local access channel on your local cable system is an unique entity. In some towns it doesn't exist while in others there is a strong community access channel with lots of local programming. It is really up to your city or town's administrators and what kind of deal they strike with the cable operator. If you are fortunate enough to have a good public access channel, then certainly get your program played on it.

Video/Production Clubs

Many of you are members of local video/production clubs. These groups often have showings. If your not a member of one, join! If you are a member of a local club, try and get those members who aren't part of AMPS, to join as well.

Low Power TV

While I believe that there is a freeze on low power TV (LPTV) licenses, low power TV does exist. LPTV stations were established as a low cost alternative

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From the Secretary.

I would like to call you attention to the label of your Movie Maker. You will note that the expiration date of your membership is listed just to the right of your last name. It will save the Society some expense if you will take a look at that and send your renewal when it is due.

All members of AMPS have received a complimentary six month subscription to "Camcorder" magazine. This trial subscription was supplied to all AMPS members at the conclusion of the AMPS-Ten Best of the West-SAVAC conference last year.

We would also appreciate it if you would invite members of your video/movie club to join AMPS. It is only with your assistance, that we can build our membership.

Roger Garretson

KODAK LAUNCHES NEW WEB SITE FOR ASPIRING FILM MAKERS

Kodak has started a Web site newsletter for up-and-coming film makers. It is called "Rising Stars." This site is part of

Kodak's initiative to provide support to new film makers. Included will be advice on how to be successful, film making tips, a Q&A section, film festivals listings, grant information, scholarships and internships. Visit the web site at www.kodak.com/go/motion and click on the "Rising Stars" icon.

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community broadcasting. These stations usually have a range of 12 to 15 miles and may or may not be on the cable system depending on community size. Seeking out these stations can be difficult. Be sure your program's content fits with the station's programming philosophy. Some stations only air family oriented material. Also be prepared to pay a fee.

Cable/Satellite Channels

No, not the History Channel, Discovery or A&E. However, there are channels out there that will air your program for a price. "Channel America," if it still exists, is a good example. Program producers pay to air their programs over this satellite delivered channel. Programs will need to fit the channel's time slots. An Internet search, or buying a satellite guide can help you

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so more people could be involved in find out how to contact these channels.

Festivals

Festivals can be as rewarding as they can be frustrating and expensive. Societies such as AMPS offer an affordable and attractive festival. However, some of the other festivals such as Central Florida, Slam dance and Black Maria are expensive! 40 to 60 dollars to enter and its hard to get accepted!

Often the judging or pre-screening comments are not provided to the entrant. Some tips on festivaling.

- If your production has a budget, include festival cost in it.
- Be selective in which festivals you enter.
- Consider the entry fee.
- Consider where the winning entries are to be seen.
- Check out the past winners.
- Does my production fit with the festival's theme?
- Does my entry fit the time and format requirements?
- What will the festival send back to me?
- Who have been the judges in the past?

Expect a high rejection rate. Festivals are extremely subjective and just because

your entry was rejected, doesn't mean it isn't a quality production.

Please send me your suggestions and experiences regarding getting your production shown.

And, we're holding another drive-in in July. Anyone interested in serving as a judge?

NEW X-RAY SCANNERS AT AIRPORTS COULD DAMAGE UNPROCESSED FILM.

A new type of high-intensity X-ray scanner that is now used to inspect luggage at more than 50 international airports will damage unprocessed film.

These new scanners emit 100 to 300 times the X-ray intensity of conventional scanners used for security purposes. Kodak scientists warn that unprocessed negative and print film will be damaged by fog caused from exposure to the high-intensity X-ray beams. X-rays have no effect on processed film.

Kodak suggests some precautions:

-Never ship unprocessed film as checked baggage with commercial airlines,

X-ray (Continued on Page 5)

DON'T PANIC (continued from page 6)

- Read the manuals and understand what buttons or switches to activate and when. Try to understand why. It is easy to push the wrong button or push buttons in the wrong sequence.
- Look at the cabling to be sure the inputs and outputs are what is needed to get the signal from and to the place intended. Also make sure the connectors are firmly seated. Treat your cables and connectors gently they can easily be damaged. Shaking them while observing the signal, video or audio, will sometimes reveal a problem.
- If you are going to record be sure the "rec" tab is in place, or positioned right for some tapes, and if the tab has been removed be sure to tape over the hole. This is sometimes called the erase protect tab or on some tapes it is a slider labeled to indicate proper position for record or protect.
- If you are using a TV for a monitor, be sure the right input has been selected. Some TVs have multiple

source inputs. If audio isn't heard be sure the TV mute isn't muted.

- VCRs also have multiple source inputs and audio channels that must be checked. If you are doing an audio dub or insert editing, the audio won't be heard, unless audio is set for "normal" not HiFi. Likewise, on playback audio dub will not be heard if audio is set on HiFi unless "mix" is set for those sets that have such settings.
- If you are using multiple remotes for two or more VCRs and a TV be sure you are using the right one.

Other things can cause problems without you or the equipment being at fault. These sophisticated devices we casually deal with have built in protections to prevent permanent damage.

- Battery problems are common to all of these devices. Batteries are simply storage devices for a limited quantity of electrical energy and when that quantity, or required voltage level, runs out the device stops working

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DON'T PANIC (continued from page 7)

until the battery is changed or recharged. Camcorders give a warning in the viewfinder, which you may have ignored. Microphones and remote controls simply quit functioning and their batteries are frequently special or hard to find types. Replacement or recharging fixes the problem but it can be frustrating if you are not prepared with replacements or recharged spares, especially on a trip.

- Camcorders and VCRs have time limits on "pause" or "still" functions that release the pause or shut the mode down after 5 minutes or so. This is to protect the tape and the recording heads from wear or contamination. It too can be annoying if it happens just as you are ready to record a never to be repeated event. You leave the VCR in "pause" while you go to answer the phone when suddenly you hear the tape you were editing playing loudly in the other room.
- A less common occurrence is a shutdown due to moisture or condensation on the tape and

recording head. Since this is rare it may take awhile to realize what went wrong unless you just happened to notice the "dew" warning in the viewfinder. This may occur when the camcorder or VCR is exposed to a rapid change to warm humid air from a cold or cool air conditioned room. The best solution is to stop trying to record and wait while the camcorder acclimates to the environment. One time this happened to me. I didn't see the "dew" warning and tried to continue recording. The tape broke but the head wasn't damaged. That same incident caused the lens to fog so that I could not get it in focus.

So far nothing is broken. You just need to stop and think. These amazingly reliable devices can have failures though and I will cover some of those in another article.

Thank you to Mr. Beach for providing this article to Movie Makers.

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-If you plan to hand-carry film, try to arrange in advance with the airport security to see if they will agree to a manual inspection. Bring a film changing bag if it is needed.

-Check the policies for commercial package and mail carriers and reputable mail couriers regarding the use of X-ray scanning in the areas where you will be shipping and receiving the film.

THINK "STORY"

by
STAN WHITSITT

Have you ever seen some bit of intriguing action and had someone say to you, "that would make a fantastic movie?" If it was like most fleeting scenes that prompt such remarks, and you had photographed it, in all probability it would end up languishing in a closet, never viewed after the initial peek. So many captivating scenes lose their initial appeal when not shown in context with a story.

One scene does not a movie make. That is the reason it is essential that the film maker "think story" as he mans his picture-making machine.

If there is a common thread running through most amateur movies that don't click with audiences or judges, it is the failure of the producer to develop a clear story line. This deficiency leaves the viewer with feelings of unfulfilled expectations as he watches.

The most interesting action and perfect photography can fall flat if . . . it does not tell that story. We all have seen beautifully photographed films that made no impact on the audience because they were merely a series of scenes spliced together between beginning and end titles.

A good film should be thought out in three phases . . . before it is shot, as it is being shot, and on the editing bench. A successful movie needs an introduction to "grab" the viewer and lead him into the story, and a climax to tell him the story is finished. Sufficient transition scenes should be planned to smooth any rough spots and lead the audience in the direction that the filmer wants him to go.

When deciding to make a movie, the film maker must strive for a film with a purpose. Whatever the purpose . . . be it to amuse and entertain, teach a lesson, or

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put across a view point, every effort should be made to mold the story in such a way, the desired impression on the viewer will be achieved.

If you analyze any professional film you will find that the story line is always followed, and you will notice that, as in amateur films, stories are put across with varying degrees of success.

The professional films do have an advantage in that they are made by teams consisting of various crafts who guide one another.

The amateur, as producer, script writer, cameraman, and editor, rolled into one, does not have the discipline engendered by the interlocking crafts to guide him. With so many artistic responsibilities it is easy for the amateur to lose sight of the ultimate goal of his production.

So, for the good of the quality of your film, and maximum impact on your audience, for every foot of film or tape you shoot, "think story." In so doing, as you reach the final stages of your production, the images you project will fall into place in an orderly fashion,

enabling the viewer to follow the story you wanted the film to tell.

Thank you to Mr. Whitsitt for providing this article to Movie Makers.

TECHNICAL

By Jim Beach

WHEN THINGS GO WRONG DON'T PANIC -- THINK

Working with camcorders, VCRs, TVs, remote controls, lighting gismos, microphones, mixers and all the different types of cables connectors and such that we have to deal with in our hobby; it is a rare day that something does not go wrong. Usually if we think it through we find that we are at fault and not the equipment. It is rare that the equipment fails but it does happen.

Before blaming the equipment think through what you are doing.

DON'T PANIC (continued on page 7)

USING REFLECTORS

Often, when shooting, especially outdoors, your subject may need just a little more light on one side to lighten shadows. Remember, video does not handle contrast well. Therefore, some kind of light will be needed to brighten up that dark area. Sure, pull out a light, use the proper gel, and run your extension cord. However, what if we're not near a power source? What if we don't have any portable lights? A properly placed reflector can lighten the area up. Professional photography reflectors can cost between 30 and 80 dollars and in some cases even more. Consider these low cost alternatives.

-A cookie or baking sheet. Although small, a cookie sheet can serve as an excellent reflector.

-Tin foil wrapped around a cookie sheet or a piece of cardboard. This works but only provides a sharp, harsh light.

-Piece of white matte board. Matte board will provide a soft reflected light. You may not even notice that the light is even

on the subject until you remove the matte board.

-A Windshield sun shade for automobiles. Try and locate the kind that has a silver shiny side to it and a softer matte finish to the other side. Then you can choose what kind of reflection you want on your subject. Prices can run as high as 9 dollars.

In a pinch, I've used an old washing machine lid, a white tee shirt stretched across a piece of wood, and even a white wall.

Be sure to recruit someone who can hold the reflector without wavering for a considerable period of time.

Keep in mind that when shooting outdoors, avoid shooting at noontime. The noontime sun causes shadows under your actors eyes which can be very unflattering.

Actually the best time to shoot outdoors is on an overcast or cloudy day as it cuts down on the contrast.

Also, when shooting outdoors, keep the sun to your back.

TRIPOD VERSES HANDHELD

I have always been an advocate for using a tripod. Not just any tripod but a sturdy and well built QUALITY tripod. Bogen has a 3130 model which, if properly cared for will perform a decent job. However, I am finding that many of my students are landing jobs in which handheld camera shooting is required.

So I feel that learning to shoot handheld is crucial for use in certain circumstances. Many professionals divide up the video production world into two areas. ENG which stands for

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

American Motion Picture Society

I would like to join the Society:

Dues USA- incl. Movie Maker \$ 7.00

Dues Canada incl. Movie Maker \$ 9.00
Dues-Foreign incl. Movie Maker \$10.00

Enclosed: _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

Mail to AMPS, 30 Kanan Rd., Oak Park, CA
91301-1105

electronic news gathering or simply shooting the news.

The second is EFP, or electronic field production. EFP is concerned with higher production values and the shooting of different types of productions such as music videos and commercials.

Obviously ENG will primarily use a handheld technique while EFP will use a tripod or a dolly of some sort.

However, when shooting an EFP style production a handheld style may be preferred in order to get a certain look for the project.

Here are some hand held shooting tips.

-Try being seated on the ground and rest both elbows on your knees while holding the camera

-Lean against a wall

-Stand with legs slightly spread, relaxed shoulders and eye pressed against the viewfinder. Your right elbow is tucked at your side.

Close Date	Festival Name & Address	Open to:	Subject	Formats	Time Limit	Entry Fee	Award	Show Dates
9/15	American International Film & Video Festival (AMPS) Roger Garretson 30 Kanan Rd., Oak Park, CA 91301-1105 Include a SASE	A	G	H J M N O P	30	\$5 \$8	T V	
8/15	Society of Amateur Videographers and Cinematographers (SAVAC)—Wallace Shaw, 42 East Mall Dr. Melville, NY 11747-2308 Include a SASE	A	G	M N P O H J	20 Min	Y	V	OCT 16-18
9/18	Ten Best of the West—Gordon Campbell, 2746 Tyler St., Long Beach, CA 90810 Include a SASE	F	G	H J M N O P	20 Min	\$10-2 entrys	V	OCT 16-18
8/98	Sao Paulo Int'l Film Festival, Alameda Lorena, 937-cj.303, 01424-001 SÃO PAULO SP BRAZIL	ABCD EF	G	16mm 35mm	No Limit	None	U	Oct 16-30
8-1-98	Louisville Film & Video Festival 2537 Frankfort Ave., Louisville, KY 40206-2467	ABCD	G	M	No Limit	\$10, 25,35	T	Nov 11-15
7/25	PSA International—Annie Wilson 5719 35th Ave NE, Seattle, WA 98105-2331	A	G	M	30 Min	\$7 \$10	V W	SEPT 3-4
N/A Not Announced or Not Available Please include a self addressed stamped envelope with your entry request								
A Non Commercial B College Student C Hi Sch Gr Sch	D Independant E Commercial F Restricted	G Open H S8 J 16mm	K Other L 3/4" M VHS	N SVHS O 8mm P Hi8	Q Invitational R Regional S Exceptions	T Cash U Trophies V Certificate	W Other Award X Approximate Y It Varies	